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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7862
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2242
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1702
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5778
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5524
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2146
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, MARCH 2, 2007

In Today's Papers

Erdogan-Buyukanit Clash over Iraq
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report the Turkish General Staff (TGS) said in a statement yesterday the views expressed by Chief of General Staff Yasar Buyukanit in a press conference in Washington last month were "not personal," but rather "the institutional views of the Turkish armed forces," contradicting comments by Prime Minister Erdogan. Erdogan has said on Thursday that the remarks were the "personal" s TalaQrriyet, Milliyet, Radi`ni Safak and others `gan phoned the Iraqi President Talabani to wish him a speedy recovery after he was taken to a hospital in Jordan. Sources quoted Talabani as telling Erdogan that he believed that problems would be resolved by joint efforts of Turkey and Iraq.
Erdogan also called the Iranian President Ahmadinejad to discuss current political developments in the region. Papers comment the Iraqi and Iranian leaders' support was important for Turkey on the eve of a possible gathering of Iraq's foreign ministers in Istanbul in April. Meanwhile, sources told Cumhuriyet and Zaman special Iraq envoy Oguz Celikkol will represent Turkey at the March 10 meeting to be held in Baghdad at ambassadorial level.

Former President Evren Suggests Division of Turkey into States
All papers report most Turkish politicians reacted negatively to comments by former president Kenan Evren, who led the 1980 military coup, that Turkey should be divided into semi-autonomous provinces, saying such a plan would endanger the country's unity and security. Turkey should adopt the "state system," Evren announced earlier this week, saying that it is possible to divide the country into eight states, namely Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Eskisehir, and Trabzon. Cumhuriyet says on page one Evren speaks like "a US spokesman," reporting Ali Topuz, a senior figure in the main opposition CHP administration, said Evren has done everything the US has asked for, "including a military takeover." Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin said "loosening the unitary structure in

Turkey will not bring any good."

Editorial Commentary: Iraqi Oil; PKK in the Political Process

Fatih Altayli, comments on Iraq's oil law in the mainstream Sabah: "According to this draft law, an independent expert commission will be able to audit the agreements the Kurdish administration signs; however, the final decision will be made by the Kurdish Turkey's main Kurdish party] deputy chair Aysel Tugluk stressed that the 'PKK should be given the chance to participate in politics under the condition that it does not interfere with the unitary state structure.' A significant number of Kurdish politicians cannot make a political decision without getting jailed PKK leader Ocalan's approval. Indeed, they cannot even announce the possibility that they might run as independent candidates until Ocalan reportedly gives such an instruction. This proves that the PKK already is involved in legal and democratic politics."

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Papers: US 'Corrects' Rice's 'Kurdistan Gaffe'

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report State spokesman Sean McCormack said in response to a press question, the word "Kurdistan" used by Secretary Rice was "reference to a geographical area." On Tuesday, Rice had described the PKK during testimony at the Senate Appropriations Committee as a terrorist group operating "on the border between Turkey and Kurdistan," drawing reactions in Turkey. McCormack said "the border is between Turkey and Iraq." Opposition CHP lawmaker Ali Topuz told a press conference yesterday that Secretary Rice has revealed "her true intentions": "The US Greater Middle East project has been given a kick-off. A Kurdish state is to be formed in northern Iraq as a prelude to an independent Kurdistan on land from Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran."

Ankara Reacts to Cyprus-France Agreement

Milliyet and Zaman report according to a deal signed Monday between France and Greek Cyprus, France will be able to use air and naval bases in south Cyprus and will execute joint military exercises with the Greek Cypriots. French would jeopardize stability and security in the eastern Mediterranean, disrupting efforts for a comprehensive resolution under the UN.

TV Highlights

NTV (6 a.m.)

Domestic News

- The Ankara prosecutor has launched an investigation into the Kurdish party DTP convention held earlier this week in Ankara.
- Joost Lagendijk, co-chairman of Turkey-EU joint parliamentary commission, said Kurdish parties should be represented in the Turkish parliament.
- A prosecutor in Ankara has demanded four "life without parole" sentences for each of the defendants Alparslan Arslan, Osman Yildirim, Ismail Sagir and Erhan Timuroglu, suspects involved in attacks against the Council of State (Danistay) and daily Cumhuriyet, for attempts of "destroying the constitutional order" and "intentionally committing murder."
- The PKK's chief Abdullah Ocalan has been poisoned in jail in Turkey, his lawyers told the press in Rome on Thursday, asking the UN to dispatch a medical team to investigate. Ocalan's defense team showed the results of tests indicating the presence of toxic metals in the Kurdish leader's hair. Turkish Justice Ministry denied claims, saying Ocalan has no serious health problem.
- Turkey's leading business forum TUSIAD urged the EU to set a target date, January 1, 2014, for Turkey's full membership, saying this would be a positive psychological impulse for the country.

International News

- NATO exercises in the Aegean were cancelled when Turkey said Greece was not abiding by a Lausanne Treaty provision for the demilitarization of Aegean islands. Greece said the annulment infringed on its sovereign rights.

- The EU Commission has asked the Greek Cypriot administration to remove the barricades blocking Ledra Street through the buffer zone in the southern part of the island.

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- Officers advising the US commander, General David Petraeus, in Baghdad have warned they have six months to win the war in Iraq or face a Vietnam-style collapse.

- Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg said illegal interrogation methods and torture are "routine" in Chechnya.

- Republican Senator John McCain officially announced he will run for president in 2008.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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